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Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service CC 318

NEBRASKA INTEGRATED REPRODUCTIVE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

I. Purpose:

Profit to the cow-calf producer has been minimal for a period of time. A producers' economic return can be increased by reducing costs. The largest single cost for a cow/calf enterprise is cow maintenance of which feed costs have the greatest impact. If non-productive cows are removed from the herd thus reducing feed costs, profit can increase dramatically. Early diagnosis of reproductive failures and removal of individuals which cause these problems is essential. Improvement or incorporation of management techniques which optimize reproductive rate is essential to the profitability of any cow herd.

In Nebraska, with almost 2.5 million cows and replacement heifers, the estimated annual weaned calf crop is 80%. This 20% loss in calf crop is due to many factors including low conception rates, abortion, dystocia, calf diseases and other management factors. If the reproductive efficiency of the beef cow in Nebraska was improved by 5%, an estimated increase in income of 30 million dollars annually could be realized by the beef producer. Utilization of the recommended management practices available for improving reproductive performance will enable producers to achieve realistic economic goals.

II. Program Overview:

The Integrated Reproductive Management (IRM) program is designed as a five year demonstration project with the resulting data and training to extend over the next 10 to 15 years. A steering committee of producers, veterinarians, and extension specialists have been appointed to give direction to the program. They have selected nine herds from about 80 nominated by Extension Agents and veterinarians across the state. These herds are representative of Nebraska's various environments. The first year's efforts have been for on-site committees of county agents, local veterinarians, steering committee members and specialists to evaluate each herd and present recommendations for initial changes. Data are being used to establish benchmarks in production and economics on each herd. By using these data, the impact of any management changes can be measured over the next 4 years.



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Leo E. Lucas, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



III. Benefits to Nebraska Beef Producers:

A. The project will identify and demonstrate the management practices which are economically feasible in beef cow herds.

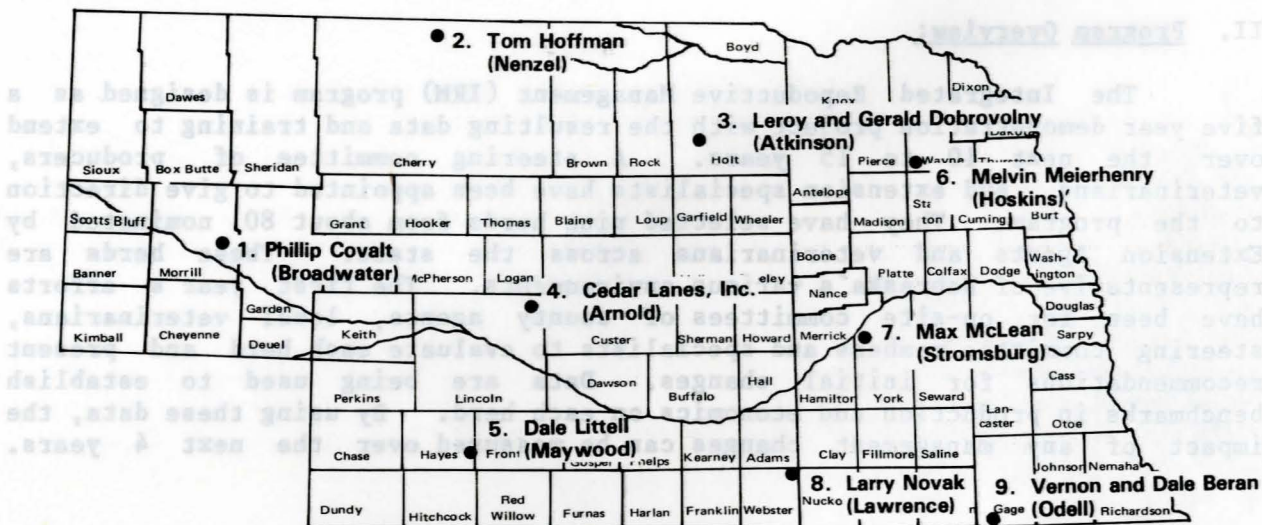
B. The economic efficiency of all production practices should be accurately evaluated by bringing together the knowledge base from several disciplines of the university system. By co-ordinating the efforts of the various inputs, overall minimum production costs will be emphasized.

C. Computer technology will be demonstrated such that a rapid and accurate evaluation of any operation can be made. Herd records will include production records, but more importantly the economic records associated with a specific production unit. The program goal is to develop through the use of the records from nine herds, computer models to be used to evaluate the economics of any other operation in the state. These models will not be limited to use by program participants, but to anyone who has a desire to measure economic efficiency in their cow-calf operation.

Thus, a system will be developed whereby a producer can analyze cow-calf production and identify the areas where profit can be enhanced by management changes.

IV. HERDS

In cooperation with extension beef specialists, the local veterinarian and the local extension agent, the steering committee has selected nine demonstration herds. Location of the herds are shown on the following map.



1. Phillip Covalt (Broadwater), 275 head of straight bred Hereford cows on 5,000 acres of grass with irrigated alfalfa and corn. The primary emphasis in this herd will concern nutrition in replacement heifers and younger cows. The rangeland also needs to be evaluated to determine the ranch's capacity.

2. Tom Hoffman (Nenzel), 1,200 head of Hereford and Hereford cross cows on 35,000 acres of native range with hay meadows. Initial efforts will be in financing and handling a highly leveraged operation. Alternatives are being explored and presented to this producer.

3. Leroy and Gerald Dobrovolsky (Atkinson), 620 head of cross bred cows and heifers on 7,500 acres of native range and meadow hay lands. Working closely with the local veterinarian and banker, a totally integrated program needs to be and is being developed for this operation. The personnel have outlined a nutritional system utilizing prairie hay and protein supplement with a complete health program.

4. Cedar Lanes, Inc. (Arnold), 270 head of Hereford and Angus cross cows on 4,000 acres of native range with irrigated and dryland corn, alfalfa, and wheat. The initial emphasis in this herd will be developing a more complete and cost effective nutrition program for cows and bulls. Facility design will also receive attention.

5. Dale Littell (Maywood), 400 head of Angus cross cows and heifers on 3,400 acres of native range with irrigated and dryland corn, wheat, forage sorghum and silage. The nutrition level required in the cow herd and the feed resources available need evaluation. There is also a need to establish a long term breeding program.

6. Melvin Meierhenry (Hoskins), 250 head of cross bred cows and heifers on 700 acres of pasture with alfalfa, corn, and silage. The main emphasis of the program here will be the development of a full scale breeding program to effectively utilize larger cows with feed resources as available. Also a pasture management program needs to be developed for overall economic efficiency.

7. Max McLean (Stromsburg), 100 head of Hereford-Angus cross cows on 440 acres of native range with alfalfa and various row crops. The calves are finished in the McLean facilities. A functional program which integrates a cow/calf enterprise (40 miles from the home place) into a row crop and feedlot program is needed. Management of calves on cornstalks is emphasized.

8. Larry Novak, (Lawrence), 125 head of Angus cows on 1,000 acres of native range with dryland milo, wheat, alfalfa and silage. Animal husbandry skills are being emphasized in this operation. Working with the cooperating veterinarian, we are developing expertise in managing calving problems. An indepth pasture program and breeding programs are being developed for this herd.

9. Vernon and Dale Beran (Odell), 100 head of straight bred Polled Hereford cows and heifers on 230 acres of pasture with dryland corn, soybeans, milo, alfalfa and wheat. Outlined for improvement are (1) development of a disease prevention program, (2) a marketing system, and (3) a pasture management system to utilize all resources efficiently.

V. Procedures

A. Representatives of the steering committee are making on-site visits to each herd with the extension agent and local veterinarian to establish (1) a baseline inventory and, (2) an IRM program for that herd. All recommended procedures and plans should be economically justifiable in these herds. The local veterinarian and the extension agent will be responsible for on-site supervision of the demonstration herd. Periodic visits by steering committee members will be made to work with the producer, beef specialist, local veterinarian, and extension agent to coordinate, plan and work with problems.

B. Marshall Frasier (technical coordinator) will correlate the records and reports made on a statewide basis. Recordkeeping will be conducted by the IRM herd owner and the local county extension agent. The coordinator will develop format of reports and benchmarks, monitor inputs and develop reports.

C. Initial educational efforts will be to develop materials and program for training of the extension agents, local veterinarian and demonstration herd manager. Frequency and location of these programs will be determined by the steering committee as dictated by the needs of the participants.

D. Beginning in the fall of 1985, the establishment of on-site field days to review progress of demonstration herds will be directed by the county extension agent. The support of steering committee members, veterinarians and producers will be necessary.

E. An annual meeting of all demonstration herd owners will be held in a central location to discuss problems, future plans and report findings on previous years' data collected. This will be done in combination with the annual IRM seminar. The annual meeting will be developed to encompass all individuals and industries involved in beef production. In addition, the extension thrust developed and projected for approximately 1986 through 1988, would be almost exclusively the delivery of the results and the impact of this coordinated effort. The efforts will develop expertise of extension personnel to evaluate and plan management programs for producers not involved as demonstration herds.

VI. Financial Support

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B. A special needs grant from Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture (ES-USDA) provided financial support in 1984.